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PRESS RELEASE

# NEWS RELEASE

## UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION, Headquarters Seventh Air Force
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AIR FORCE FLIES
ELEPHANT AIRLIFT

NHA TRANG (7AF) -- Air Force C-130 Hercules transport crews are used to flying almost anything you can name. Even elephants.

Flying elephants isn't easy. It takes the help of the U.S. Army Special Forces, the Marine Corps, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Cleveland Zoo and the U. S. Bureau of Narcotics.

It all began when an Army Special Forces team at the diminutive Vietnamese village of Tra Bong offered to help the 400 Montagnard and Vietnamese families in the area start their own industry. With the heavy growths of timber in the area, a sawmill looked like the answer to the villagers' economic problems, and with the help of USAID, the villagers soon had a burgeoning business going.

Before long, however, the villagers had cut down all the trees near enough to the sawmill to haul by hand, and a problem arose. The local terrain was so rugged that machinery for hauling logs was useless. Tra Bong was in danger of losing its only industry.

Elephants, the villagers said, were the only answer. Two suitable elephants were found and with the help of USAID funds, purchased at a price

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of 70,000 piastors (about $590) each. Unfortunately, however, the elephants were located in Ban Don, more than 170 miles from Tra Bong. The pachyderms couldn't be transported by land because the trip was too long and the Viet Cong controlled too much of the intervening territory. A move by sea was ruled out because it would also take too long and there was the danger of the elephants becoming seasick. The only way to move the 3-ton, 6-foot-high animals, it appeared, was by air.

Special Forces Captain Scott Gantt, the man given the job of moving the elephants, decided to call on the Air Force.

When Gantt approached 7th Air Force with his project, he was told that the elephants could easily be moved in the cavernous C-130 Hercules cargo transports, provided the animals could be immobilized enough to prevent their thrashing around in the aircraft.

After hours of transoceanic phone calls, Gantt finally learned from the Cleveland Zoo that a drug called M-99, manufactured by an English firm, would keep his 6,000-pound charges docile for the necessary time. When Gantt arranged for a shipment of M-99, however, he ran afoul of the U. S. Bureau of Narcotics, which demanded that he spell out how the drug was to be used before it could be shipped.

Gantt complied, the drug arrived, and on April 1, a C-130 crew from Task Force Bravo, a special airlift mission based at Nha Trang Air Base, landed their aircraft on a dirt strip near the Special Forces camp of Trang Phuc and prepared to take on board their most unusual passengers ever.

While the first of the animals stood on a cargo net, Gantt Stood behind him and fired a hypodermic dart from an air gun into the elephant's rump, injecting him with the M-99. Five minutes later, "Clyde," as the

Green Berets had nicknamed him, lay dozing peacefully in the net. A forklift hoisted him onto a wooden platform and lifted him into the gaping rear doors of the waiting C-130.

With Clyde strapped firmly in place, the Hercules crew took off for the Marine Air Base at Chu Lai, 20 miles from Tra Bong. At Chu Lai, Clyde was removed from the C-130 and still wrapped in the cargo net on his platform, was slung beneath a Marine CH-53 "Super Jolly Green Giant" for the final miles of his trip. The chopper whirled away in a blast of sand and dust, and 15 minutes later Clyde was settling to the ground at Tra Bong in front of the watchful eyes of more than 2,000 villagers. Then, after a repeat of the first trip with Clyde's partner, the village and the sawmill were back in the lumber business.

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